

Good afternoon Montgomery Council!

My name is Kimberly L. Fogg and I am the Founder and CEO of Global Sustainable Partnerships (GSP) and GSP has been partnering with The Black Physicians and Health Care Network (BPHN) for the past couple of years, and they have been a major contributor to this County's ability to achieve racial equity by addressing the health disparities that exist in the Black community and "targeting efforts and resources to meet the evolving needs of Black Montgomery County residents. During COVID Together we paved the way to create an integrated culturally appropriate community-based education outreach efforts, because we have built trust in our Black communities, increased collaborations, and continue to share resources to connect Black residents with culturally specific medical care/social needs.

The BPHN is a culturally tailored health and wellness approach that focuses on building a trustworthy, inclusive model for total health engagement for the diverse Black communities in Montgomery County. BPHN, offers free specialized care for the Black Montgomery County residents by connecting them to Black Primary Care Physicians, Specialist, Mental Health Practitioners. In addition to contact with healthcare providers, this model also includes access to a full complement of community resources including food hubs, rental assistance, financial assistance, veterans' assistance, and more. We are excited about this partnership with BPHN, because they truly understand our goals of investing in health and wellness in Black communities (e.g., *BPHN supports our "Soul Synergy: Severing Ties with Intergenerational Chronic Illnesses"* Youth Diabetes Management Coaches training is a progressive healthcare pipeline program for high school youth in Montgomery County, that provides them the skillset to serve their community and family members as Youth Diabetes Management Coaches.

GSP has just been approved as the 1st Teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) Implementation organization in Montgomery County and we are laser focused on providing tMHFA for our at-risk Black and Brown Youth/teens in our high schools and youth-serving organizations and providing Youth Mental Health First (YMHFA) training for school staff, parents/guardians, youth-serving organization staff. The last two years have presented Black and Brown students with unprecedented challenges, adolescents are being called upon to provide support for their peers for depression, anxiety, aggression, bullying, cyberbullying, substance abuse, they lack the self-management and coping skills and need to be adequately equipped for this role. To make matters worse, the recent school shootings, make children, and their parents lack confidence in their safety at school/community. These challenges have pushed the mental health of teenagers to a breaking point, putting this population in a state of emergency, especially given the reduced access to health care. In response to this crisis, we created "It Takes a Village: Severing Ties with Generational Trauma," program because we saw a need to focus on students' social and emotional development as well as their academic and life success, recognizing that they are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. The TMHFA program aims to increase mental health literacy, decrease stigmatizing attitudes towards individuals with mental illness, and improve TMHFA behaviors. We see the value in promoting a more wholistic approach to provide social support and appropriate help and promoting a positive mind and body wellness

ecosystem for our youth and their families. We are looking to partner with BPHN to provide the much needed mental health support to sever ties with generational trauma and having access to those black doctors will not only save lives but will empowers our communities by giving the youth and their families access to the invaluable resources, they need to feel confident in their physical, social, and emotional safety.

The collaborative efforts are indicative of “It Takes A Village” partners history of effective culturally appropriate and linguistically competent outreach that aims to achieve health equity and eliminate health disparities in our youth and teens, school staff and parents. Our goal with BPHN is to make a positive and lasting impact on the mental health and well-being of teenagers in our community and I believe that investing in the mental health of our youth is vital for their future success and the well-being of our community as a whole.

Please continue to fund BPHN – b/c The BPHN works! Fifty percent (50%) of BPHN clients receive mental health services. Although there are behavioral health providers that we can work with that are covered through Montgomery Cares, Medicaid along with offering a sliding scale to make these service affordable. research tells us that Black patients treated by Black health and mental health providers do better and experience higher patient satisfaction. Therefore, due to the culturally appropriateness of BPHB services, they need to be supported and expanded. I believe that investing in the mental health of our youth is vital for their future success and the well-being of our community as a whole.

Thank you!